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Attached is the daily news report for Jan. 27.

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DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

UTAH – TOP STORIES – JANUARY 27, 2017

1. Fierce BLM critic Mike Noel wants to lead federal agency

The Deseret News, Jan. 26 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — Mike Noel was a 22-year career employee of the Bureau of Land Management, working in 1996 as the project lead on the proposed Smoky Hollow coal mine when it was swept up in a monument designation.

2. Museum's DinoFest2017 weekend to highlight Utah fossil fame

The Salt Lake Tribune, Jan. 26 | Brian Maffly

Paleontologist Lindsay Zanno spends much of her summer in remote southern Utah deserts, using brushes, picks, trowels and sometimes jack hammers to liberate 90-million-year-old bones from ancient sediments in a quest to identify new species of gigantic extinct reptiles and determine how they lived.

3. Off-road enthusiasts raise concerns, make requests at 1st of 6 listening sessions

St George News, Jan. 24 | Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – Off-road enthusiasts gathered Monday at a listening session organized to help the Arizona Bureau of Land Management better serve recreational users in the future.

4. Gold Butte, Vermilion Cliffs and geology: BLM lecture series returns

The Spectrum, Jan. 27 | David DeMille

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5. Resolutions advance to erase Bears Ears, Grand Staircase

The Salt Lake Tribune, Jan. 27 | Lee Davidson s

Utah lawmakers took a first step Friday to formally ask President Donald Trump to erase the new Bears Ears National Monument — and also to rescind large sections of the 20-year-old Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – TOP STORIES

1. METHANE: Emissions mitigation coalition fears BLM rule rollback

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Pamela King

A group of companies with a financial stake in the Obama administration's strategy to reduce emissions on public lands are sounding the alarm on President Trump's likely attempt to walk back the Bureau of Land Management's methane rule.

2. FEDERAL AGENCIES: What's on the chopping block in Trump's 1st budget request?

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Robin Bravender

President Trump and congressional Republicans are expected to take a hatchet to the federal budget — with major cuts likely coming soon for some of the Obama administration's top environmental and energy initiatives.

3. REGULATIONS: Bishop sets stage for scrapping 'most egregious' Obama rules

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Dylan Brown

Companies and regulators from several states today backed House Republicans' crusade to scrap various Obama administration regulations.



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4. PUBLIC LANDS: Oversight Republicans demand documents on FWS lead ammo ban

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Corbin Hiar

Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee are requesting documents from the Fish and Wildlife Service about a controversial plan to phase out lead ammunition and fishing tackle on wildlife refuges.

5. TRIBES: Renewed push for expanded drilling under Trump

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Valerie Volcovici, Reuters

Some Native American tribes are pushing to fast-track drilling and mining leases on their lands now that President Trump is in office.

6. EPA: Website to be updated next week — spokesman

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Hannah Hess

One week into the Trump administration, U.S. EPA's climate change page remains as it was under President Obama.

7. CLEAN POWER PLAN: States, cities defend Obama EPA in latest legal challenge

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Amanda Reilly

Seventeen states and Washington, D.C., today moved to defend the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan against the latest legal bid by challengers to kill the rule.

8. SCIENCE: Letters to Trump admin air concerns over communication limits

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Christa Marshall

Two major science organizations have sent letters to the Trump administration expressing concern about reports of the muzzling of federal scientists and their research.



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UTAH – FULL STORY

1. Fierce BLM critic Mike Noel wants to lead federal agency

The Deseret News, Jan. 26 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — Mike Noel was a 22-year career employee of the Bureau of Land Management, working in 1996 as the project lead on the proposed Smoky Hollow coal mine when it was swept up in a monument designation.

About eight months after former President Bill Clinton's surprise creation of the 1.9 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Noel quit the agency.

Now, one of its harshest, most blistering critics, Noel wants to take charge. Why?

"I could do a better job of managing it than the people who are managing it now," he said simply.

Noel, backed by more than 30 powerful endorsements, wants to lead the federal agency that controls more than 245 million acres — the most of any agency in the United States, the one that controls two-thirds of Utah — and shake things up.

"What I beat up on is the fact that the agency doesn't follow its organic act," he said. "Their mission was to retain lands in public ownership, still allowing for sales and exchanges of lands that are uneconomic to manage, but they got away from that."

Speculation has been swirling for weeks that Noel, a Kane County cattle rancher, head of a water conservancy district and 15-year member of the Utah Legislature, had thrown his proverbial hat in the ring for the BLM's top job.

The critics have already come out against Noel in a pre-emptive strike, even though the man to potentially pick Noel — ex-Navy Seal and Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke — has yet to be confirmed as President Donald Trump's Interior Secretary.

On Thursday, Alliance for a Better Utah issued a news release about Noel's possible appointment, announced a petition drive against it and said Noel's policies and "temperament" are not congruent with the position of BLM national director.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, Attorney General Sean Reyes, both state senators, members of Utah's congressional delegation and a string of other organizations — including the Western States Sheriffs Association, Utah Association of Counties and rural electric associations and co-ops in Nevada and Utah — think otherwise.



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"Upon graduating from the University of Berkeley, California, Mr. Noel began working for the agency he now ought to run, the BLM," wrote Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, in his letter of endorsement.

Lee's letter goes on to say, "Mr. Noel has the experience to identify the BLM's warts, the vision to chart a new path for the bureau, and the resolve to see these changes through. I can think of no other better person to run the BLM."

On Thursday, Noel spoke in detail to the Deseret News about what he views as the agency's flaws. He also pointed out that he didn't lobby for the job initially but was recruited by several people, including Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, to apply.

"They're not managing it properly, the way they are supposed to" Noel said. "It's been turned over to a bunch of people who don't understand."

Noel said he was introduced to Donald Trump Jr. five months ago by Don Peay, founder of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, and a controversial Utah lobbyist who garnered contracts to fight the reintroduction of wolves into the state and keep the greater sage grouse off the federal endangered species list.

In the introduction, Noel said Peay told the future president's son, "This is Mike Noel. He needs to be the next national director of the BLM."

It's gone on from there.

Noel said he doesn't find it strange to want to right what he sees are the wrongs of an agency that has strayed from its multiple-use mission and instead devolved into a government machine steeped in bureaucratic morass and paralyzed by environmental lawsuits.

"There is no question there are laws and regulations that I would follow, just like I followed the Federal Land Policy Management Act for years when I worked there," he said.

"They don't manage it for multiple use. The roads that were supposed to be grandfathered in, thousands of miles of roads, are not. ... It takes forever to get a right of way. They've cut hundreds of thousands of grazing permits."

Alliance for a Better Utah wrote that Noel at the helm of the public lands agency would be a "catastrophe" to Utah's outdoor recreation economy.

But Noel, like Herbert, Hatch and so many conservative GOP leaders, argue that having one use of the land, such as hiking or backpacking, doesn't mean it has to come at the expense of traditional Western uses like ranching.

The scale that has tipped too far, according to Hatch, creates its own sort of catastrophe, with a Washington-minded BLM that has cut off access and has "established a growing climate of mistrust" among Westerners and the agency over the last eight years.

"Moving forward, this divide must be healed," Hatch wrote in his endorsement to Trump's transition team for the Interior Department.



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"Now more than ever we need a national director who understands that we must restore a more balanced use of our nation's public lands, embodied by the BLM's multiple-use mandate, and I believe my friend, Mike Noel, will strike that balance," Hatch wrote.

Noel has a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's degree in plant ecology. Often blustery and steeped in his rural roots — he runs 200 head of cattle in Kane County — Noel received an award for his conservation ethic as a rancher in the mid-1990s and said he wouldn't disembowel the agency like so many say.

He's derided, criticized and lampooned by his critics, which include the most influential and litigious environmental groups in the state. He remains unabashed in his convictions, however, and fires back — saying he represents the voice of rural Utah, a voice not heard today by the BLM.

"When it takes seven years to get a power line, when a full community on Cedar Mountain is out of power and having to use generators ... that is crazy. That is insane," he said.

On Thursday, Noel unveiled a resolution calling on Congress to shrink the boundaries of the national monument where he once worked on a preliminary analysis of a plan to mine 72 million tons of recoverable coal.

There is no reason, he said, for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to be bigger than 781 square miles.

"781 square miles? That's a pretty big monument."

And that type of thinking is what scares his foes, and endears his supporters.

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2. Museum's DinoFest2017 weekend to highlight Utah fossil fame

The Salt Lake Tribune, Jan. 26 | Brian Maffly

Paleontologist Lindsay Zanno spends much of her summer in remote southern Utah deserts, using brushes, picks, trowels and sometimes jack hammers to liberate 90-million-year-old bones from ancient sediments in a quest to identify new species of gigantic extinct reptiles and determine how they lived.

Utah is justly famous for dinosaur bones from various geological eras, including those familiar characters of the Jurassic, but Zanno is most interested in species unknown to science, many found in Utah's Cedar Mountain formation deposited 98 and 127 million years ago.

"We uncovered a whole new ecosystem that we haven't documented before," said Zanno, who will be the lead-off speaker for this weekend's DinoFest 2017 at the Natural History Museum of



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Utah. "Every skeleton we find is a new animal, a new turtle, multiple new dinosaurs, meat eaters and interesting plant eaters."

The events are open to the public for the price of admission to the museum. Activities include kid-oriented classes on building and drawing dinosaurs.

Zanno's keynote at noon Saturday, titled "Fearsome Continent: New Discoveries Reveal the Lost Cretaceous Worlds of North America," describes her team's recent dinosaur finds and explores how these animals may have lived at the dawn of the Late Cretaceous 98 million years ago.

Zanno will be joined by a dozen other paleontologists giving half-hour talks on their Utah-based work. Participants include the museum's paleontology curator Randy Irmis; state Paleontologist Jim Kirkland; Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument paleontologist Alan Titus; and Museum of Moab executive director John Foster.

Zanno's co-keynoter, Luis Chiappe of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, will speak to the importance of field work to dinosaur paleontology and the role of museum collections.

DinoFest includes an open house at the museum's Paleo Prep Lab where volunteers and staff toil over specimens to prepare them for study. Attendees can also view the fossil collections and demonstrations of a new program called Research Quest that uses fossils from museum collections.

Just 1 percent of the museum's bone collection is ever put on public display, according to paleontology collections manager Carrie Levitt.

"There will be specimens that no one has seen before," Levitt said. "They will just be opened up. They might be the next new dinosaur species."

Added Zanno: "This is really to get people in Utah excited about their local resources and why it's important to study paleontology and protect the resources there. Utah has a key role to play in understanding these broad scientific questions around the world."

Now the curator of paleontology at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Zanno did her graduate work at the University of Utah.

One mystery she hopes to unravel centers on the Late Cretaceous when endemic North American disappeared from the fossil record, only to be replaced by creatures that bore greater resemblance



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to Asian dinosaurs. Were these dinosaurs wiped out in an extinction event, she wonders, or were they gradually displaced by newcomers?

Curious dinophiles can learn more at noon Saturday and meet Zanno and other paleosleuths in person.

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3. Off-road enthusiasts raise concerns, make requests at 1st of 6 listening sessions

St George News, Jan. 24 | Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – Off-road enthusiasts gathered Monday at a listening session organized to help the Arizona Bureau of Land Management better serve recreational users in the future.

The listening session was sponsored by the National Off-highway Vehicle Conservation Council, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to “creating a positive future for off-highway vehicle recreation.”

The session was well attended, with 60-70 participants representing all types of off-highway vehicle users, including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and full-size four-wheel drive vehicles.

“I think it went very well,” conservation council Arizona project manager Marc Hildesheim said. “There was a lot of good communication, a lot of unique thoughts and ideas here.”

The meeting focused on the Arizona Strip, a 2-million-acre area south and east of St. George that is popular with many Southern Utahns for hunting, fishing, off-highway vehicle travel and other recreational uses. The area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management Arizona Strip District office in St. George.

The National Off-highway Vehicle Conservation Council is working with the BLM to find out how the agency can provide access to high-quality off-highway vehicle recreation in Arizona.

Information gathered from the St. George meeting, as well as five additional sessions held across Arizona, will be compiled into a report for the BLM to use in creating a motorized action plan for the state as well as other future planning efforts.

Participants were asked to complete questionnaires and then speak about what recreational activities are taking place on the Arizona Strip, where the activities were taking place, what experiences are missing and what the BLM could do to enhance recreational experiences.



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Information gathered will be used to help guide future planning, including but not limited to resource management and travel management plans. However, the process does not replace the more formal planning efforts.

Retaining access to trails was one of the most frequently expressed desires of participants at the listening session. “Stop closing trails,” several participants said.

The need for better maps and better trails signs on the vast Arizona Strip was also frequently mentioned by participants, who said that existing maps are not detailed enough and it is too easy for even those familiar with the area to get lost.

The lack of adequate route signs also makes it difficult for emergency and rescue personnel to pinpoint the location of someone who needs help.

More open-travel rock crawling designations are needed, attendees said. Currently the Sand Mountain Special Recreation Management Area near Hurricane is one of the only places available to Southern Utahns where rock crawling is legal.

The desire for more regional connecting trails was expressed by several participants during the listening session.

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 authorized the creation of the High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle Trail through BLM and Forest Service Land in Washington County. The trail would connect off-highway vehicle trails in Arizona to Utah and on to the massive Paiute ATV Trail system in central Utah. However, no progress has been made on the trail.

One meeting attendee pointed out that the industry needs to do a better job of representing their sport to the general public.

There is a common misconception that off-road means traveling off an existing road or trail, which is not the case. One participant said national advertising campaigns showing off-road vehicles “driving straight up the side of a mountain” aren’t helping the sport’s image, either.

Another concern is the lack of information about different vehicle licensing requirements and other rules between Utah, Arizona and Nevada. Many off-highway roads cross state borders. In remote areas, the same remote dirt road can change from a BLM road to a county road to a state road, and vehicle laws change along with ownership.



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Other concerns mentioned at the meeting included the lack of BLM staff with enough time to coordinate volunteer groups who would like to help with maintenance, trail building and education.

The National Off-highway Vehicle Conservation Council has already completed listening sessions and the information-gathering process in Montana and New Mexico. Several other states will have the opportunity to participate, Hildesheim said, including Utah. Utah is on the short list to participate, but the arrangement is not finalized yet.

In Montana and New Mexico, the result has been a better understanding by the BLM of off-highway vehicle users' needs and desires, new partnerships between local off-highway vehicle enthusiasts and the BLM and the identification of high-priority off-highway vehicle investment opportunities and "experience gaps."

In addition, targeted areas were identified for family, beginner and safety training and facilities at popular off-highway areas in the two states.

Details

Five more meetings are scheduled this week across Arizona:

Kingman: Jan. 24, 6-9 p.m. | Ramada, 3100 E. Andy Divine Ave.

Quartzsite: Jan. 25, 6-9 p.m. | Quartzsite Community Center, 295 Chandler St.

Tucson: Jan. 26, 6-9 p.m. | Sheraton Tucson Hotel & Suites, 5151 E. Grant Road.

Wickenburg: Jan. 27, 6-9 p.m. | Coffinger Park Recreation Center, 175 E. Swilling Ave.

Phoenix: Jan. 28, 6-9 p.m. | La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road.

Anyone who is interested in participating but can't attend a meeting or is looking for more information can contact Hildesheim at the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council via email at marc@nohvcc.org.

To learn more about the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council and its involvement in BLM's recreation action plan, see the website. For more resources, go [here](#).

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4. Gold Butte, Vermilion Cliffs and geology: BLM lecture series returns

The Spectrum, Jan. 27 | David DeMille

ST. GEORGE, Utah - Every Friday, from October through April, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and its partners host the popular Brown Bag Lecture series which provides unique opportunities for members of the public to learn more about the area's natural resources and public lands. Speakers include geologists, range specialists, biologists, archaeologists, rangers and other specialists who cover subjects tied to the Arizona Strip and surrounding public lands. For those who want to learn more before venturing out or are curious about these remote and rugged landscapes, the lectures are an excellent way to bring the resources and related issues to the community's doorstep.

The lectures, which begin at noon and last one hour, are held at the Interagency Information Center, located at 345 E. Riverside Drive in St. George, Utah. Admission is free, but space is limited for this popular lecture series. Attendees are advised to reserve their free seating early; tickets are available one week prior to each program. To obtain tickets visit the Interagency Information Center or call (435)688-3200 for more information.

The lecture series is sponsored by the Dixie/Arizona Strip Interpretive Association, BLM, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service.

Feb. 3- Ask a Ranger

Most of us, at one time or another, wanted to become a Ranger. Here is your opportunity to ask a bonafide public lands ranger what the job is really like. Hear about the highlights of a typical day, as well as the greatest challenges facing those charged with protecting public lands.

Feb. 10 – Mark Deshowitz-Geology of Washington County

Washington County lies at the convergence of three distinct geological areas: the Mojave Desert, Colorado Plateau and Great Basin. The county also boasts the largest laccolith (magma injected between layers of sedimentary rock) in the United States: Pine Valley Mountain. Retired geologist Mark Dershowitz will describe this astounding landscape.

Feb. 17 – Jaina Moan-Friends of Gold Butte, NV

Gold Butte, one of the nation's newest national Monuments, is located between Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument, Arizona, and Lake Mead National Recreation Area, just south of



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the City of Mesquite, Nevada. Jaina Moan, Executive Director, will relate what is now in store for this amazing area.

Feb. 24 – Vermilion Cliffs National Monument

National Geographic has called Vermilion Cliffs National Monument a “little-known wonder.” This dramatic piece of the Colorado Plateau includes the world-famous “Wave”, as well as Buckskin Gulch, one of the longest slot canyons in the world, and is the home of a California condor release site. Join us to learn from monument staff about present and future management of the great resources contained within this spectacular landscape.

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5. **Resolutions advance to erase Bears Ears, Grand Staircase**

The Salt Lake Tribune, Jan. 27 | Lee Davidson

Utah lawmakers took a first step Friday to formally ask President Donald Trump to erase the new Bears Ears National Monument — and also to rescind large sections of the 20-year-old Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

The House Rules Committee approved separate resolutions, HCR11 and HCR12, to proceed for public hearings and debate with only the two Democrats on the committee opposing them.

The Rules Committee rarely holds hearings on legislation, and usually just assigns bills to other committees. But its chairman is Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, whose district includes the national monuments, and he is a leading opponent of them.

To show the importance lawmakers give the Bears Ears resolution, House Speaker Greg Hughes is sponsoring it — even though speakers traditionally sponsor few bills.

"Utah has become the ATM for payback for special interests" by Democratic presidents, Hughes said, adding it ignored the desires of most local residents.

Barack Obama created the 1.35 million acre Bears Ears monument last month. Bill Clinton created the 1.9 million acre Grand Staircase in 1996.

Hughes said Utah's congressional delegation requested the Bears Ears resolution to show local leaders are on the same page in seeking reversal of the monument.



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The only person to speak against the Bears Ears resolution was Rep. Carol Moss, D-Holladay. She said the movement for it came from Utah Navajos and Utes, and that some polls show most Utahns favor it — and came largely because legislation on protecting the area stalled in Congress. "There is another side of the story," she said.

Garfield County Commissioner Leland Pollock had a very different take and denounced the Grand Staircase monument as "a curse to a county, it really is. ... Anyone who says this has been good for Escalante, go talk to the families there." He said the monument has made it difficult for farmers, ranchers and others to make a living because of land restrictions, shown by plummeting school enrollment. Local business leaders in Escalante have attributed the enrollment drop to other factors unrelated to the monument.

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E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – FULL STORY

1. METHANE: Emissions mitigation coalition fears BLM rule rollback

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Pamela King

A group of companies with a financial stake in the Obama administration's strategy to reduce emissions on public lands are sounding the alarm on President Trump's likely attempt to walk back the Bureau of Land Management's methane rule.

GOP lawmakers appear poised to strike down the BLM action to curb natural gas flaring, venting and leakage from oil and gas production on public and tribal lands. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) has said legislators could invoke the Congressional Review Act, which authorizes a simple majority in both chambers to overrule federal regulations enacted within the last 60 legislative days (Greenwire, Jan. 25).

Firms that help operators detect and repair the gas leaks the BLM rule targets were surprised by industry replies that federal oversight on methane would kill jobs and cut profits.

Maintenance workers who can patch oil field and pipeline breaches will be in high demand under the BLM plan, Allison Sawyer, CEO of Rebellion Photonics, a company that creates tools to pinpoint leaks, said yesterday on a conference call to reporters.

"If you're trying to create good, blue-collar manufacturing jobs that can never be exported, this seems like a home run," Sawyer said.



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There are also economic benefits to methane capture, said Jason Libersky, co-founder and CEO of the engineering and analytics firm Quantigy. One client has saved \$1.7 million to \$2.2 million per year by collecting and selling methane, rather than allowing the gas to escape to the atmosphere, he said, noting that savings vary based on producer and location.

"Before utilizing contractors to go out there and repair issues, we also have huge cost savings for the end user, and that's on top of the environmental impact we have," said Craig O'Neill, senior district sales manager at FLIR Systems.

The economics of methane capture would be more favorable to industry if federal regulators didn't step into the process, said Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance, a regional trade association.

Sawyer, Libersky and O'Neill spoke yesterday on a conference call led by the Center for Methane Emissions Solutions (CMES), a coalition Sgamma says has "confused" some companies into believing federal methane regulations are the path to increased market share.

"The vast majority of the industry — including the majority of companies who develop methane capture technology — are not likewise confused," Sgamma said. "They understand that companies already have an incentive to capture as much methane as possible because it's the very product they sell. Those companies, unlike members of CMES, understand that the best way to gain market share is to develop products that capture more methane more economically than their competitors, not by advocating for federal regulation that is less efficient and emphasizes red tape over real solutions."

The Western Energy Alliance has helped spearhead legal opposition to BLM's methane regulations. The U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming last week denied a request by the alliance and other parties to stop implementation of the rule (Energywire, Jan. 17).

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2. FEDERAL AGENCIES: What's on the chopping block in Trump's 1st budget request?

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Robin Bravender

President Trump and congressional Republicans are expected to take a hatchet to the federal budget — with major cuts likely coming soon for some of the Obama administration's top environmental and energy initiatives.



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Programs that could be in the crosshairs: U.S. EPA climate offices, the renewable energy shop at the Energy Department and efforts to increase federal land ownership.

During the presidential campaign, Trump made it clear that environmental programs would be targeted. "Environmental protection, what they do is a disgrace. Every week they come out with new regulations," Trump told Fox News during the campaign, referring to EPA. He added, "We'll be fine with the environment. We can leave a little bit, but you can't destroy businesses."

Now that he's moved into the White House, questions abound over precisely which programs will be purged.

"I've always looked on the budget as being the policy document that says where your focus really is, what you're going to do," said Christine Todd Whitman, former EPA administrator during the George W. Bush administration.

For clues, sources close to the Trump administration point to the sweeping budget outlines laid out by conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation, Republican Study Committee and Competitive Enterprise Institute. Those groups have offered up an array of programs at agencies like EPA and the Energy Department that could soon be on the chopping block.

The Trump administration's first major budget proposal — its request for fiscal 2018 — could come as soon as next month. The White House faces a deadline to send its annual budget request to Congress by the first Monday in February, although those requests often arrive late. Trump may submit a rough outline, with a beefed-up blueprint coming in the spring.

During President Obama's first year in office, he submitted an outline in February, followed by a fleshed-out proposal in May.

Trump's critics and supporters alike will be watching closely.

Myron Ebell, who led Trump's EPA transition team, said yesterday in an interview that he sees big opportunities for cuts in that agency's programs and workforce. He said he'd like to see the staff cut from about 15,000 to about 5,000 people (Greenwire, Jan. 26).

He pointed to CEI's budget [plan](#), which calls for repudiating the Paris climate accord, overturning or defunding EPA's climate rules for power plants and telling EPA that it has no authority to use the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gases.



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Ebell and others say they are expecting to soon see cuts in line with what some conservative groups have long been advocating.

The heavy influence of conservative think tanks in the new administration can be seen in the fleet of staffers Trump has already brought on. Ebell and another CEI scholar helped staff EPA's transition. And Heritage Foundation staffers were deployed throughout federal agencies to help with the administration handover. One of the political staffers now working at EPA, David Kreutzer, is a Heritage veteran.

Of course, conservative think tanks aren't the only ones who will be influencing the federal budgets during the Trump administration. Members of Congress, administration officials with competing views, outside stakeholders and others will have strong opinions about which programs are cut, and there will be no shortage of lobbying to keep various environmental and energy initiatives intact.

"The think tank community is a good barometer of where the small government conservatives are," said Scott Segal, an industry lobbyist at Bracewell LLP.

But it's only "a piece of the puzzle," he added. "The Trump administration has no shortage of incoming ideas from various quarters of the Republican and conservative establishment," as well as from stakeholders in the investment and infrastructure communities.

Conservative insiders also point to the Republican Study Committee's 2017 budget [blueprint](#) as a guidepost for what may be coming.

Broadly, the RSC outline calls for opening up new areas of the outer continental shelf for energy production, approving the Keystone XL pipeline, blocking EPA's climate rules for power plants and reforming the renewable fuel standard.

EPA

If they gain traction, the Heritage Foundation's [proposals](#) could mean a very different EPA.

For starters, the think tank calls to "eliminate climate-related programs" and calls for cutting funds for rules to curtail greenhouse gases from vehicles and power plants, two marquee Obama administration regulations. The blueprint also suggests eliminating the greenhouse gas reporting program and climate research funding.



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The Heritage Foundation says that Congress — not EPA — should decide whether carbon dioxide should be regulated or considered in permit reviews. The budget blueprint also disputes the scientific consensus that humans are the driving force behind climate change.

"While carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions may have contributed in some capacity to climate variations, the available climate data do not indicate that the earth is heading toward catastrophic warming with dire consequences for human health and public welfare, nor do the data indicate that the dominant driving force behind climate change is human-induced greenhouse gas emissions," the outline says.

Enforcement programs could also see cuts at Trump's EPA. The Heritage Foundation outline would slash the civil enforcement budget by 30 percent. "EPA engages in unnecessary and excessive legal actions," it says.

EPA's civil rights programs would also be scaled back under the Heritage proposal, and EPA's environmental justice programs would be eliminated entirely. "The EPA often applies the law to prevent job-creating businesses from developing in low-income communities, thus blocking the very economic opportunity that the communities need," the Heritage Foundation said.

DOE

Several DOE offices would be eliminated entirely under the Heritage blueprint.

Those include energy efficiency and renewable programs, a nascent-technology investment shop, and other efforts some conservatives say inappropriately promote certain energy sources over others.

The DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy is among those slashed in the Heritage proposal.

Funding research and development for technologies like wind, energy and biofuels "is not an investment in basic research, but outright commercialization," according to the Heritage Foundation.

Efforts to cut that program or any DOE offices are sure to run up against opposition from agency staff and outside stakeholders with an interest in keeping those initiatives churning.



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During his confirmation hearing this month, Trump's DOE nominee Rick Perry said he couldn't confirm reports that transition aides sought to slash DOE research funding and eliminate offices tied to renewable and fossil energy research (Greenwire, Jan. 19).

Also on the chopping block in the Heritage outline are DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) office, DOE's energy innovation hubs and the DOE Office of Fossil Energy.

Public lands

The Heritage budget would prevent the net addition of new public lands to the federal portfolio and would rev up energy production on existing federal properties.

"Congress should open all federal waters and all non-wilderness, non-federal-monument lands to exploration and production of America's natural resources," the outline says.

The Heritage Foundation would prohibit a net increase in public lands, noting that the "federal estate is massive," and "federal ownership and federal regulation of public lands restrict economic activity, and, in many instances, have created environmental problems due to mismanaged lands and lack of a proper incentive structure to maintain the properties."

Another potential target for cuts: the Land and Water Conservation Fund. That fund, which uses royalties from offshore energy development to purchase land for parks and recreation areas, has come under fire from conservative Republicans. The Heritage Foundation says it should expire permanently. "Rather than placing more decisions under Washington's control, Congress should empower the states and local communities to protect their environments, maximize the value of the land, and create new opportunities for economic development," the budget outline says.

An effort to target the LWCF could see opposition from Interior Secretary-designee Ryan Zinke, whose support for the program has won him accolades from Democrats and environmentalists.

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3. REGULATIONS: Bishop sets stage for scrapping 'most egregious' Obama rules

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Dylan Brown

Companies and regulators from several states today backed House Republicans' crusade to scrap various Obama administration regulations.

House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) outlined why the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Stream Protection Rule and the Bureau of Land Management's methane venting and flaring rule were in line for Congressional Review Act scrutiny next week. The law allows Congress to "disapprove" a regulation.

"These are probably the most egregious of all the rules that we can think of," Bishop said on a call with reporters today.

With Congress rallying around President Trump's regulatory rollback, Bishop said lawmakers were still figuring out which Obama-era actions the new administration will tackle on its own.

"My personal preference would be for Congress to take over the policymaking responsibility as much as possible," he said. "And, if nothing else, try and redefine what coordination and cooperation actually means in the statute, which is supposed to take place and, especially for these two rules, did not happen."

Interstate Mining Compact Commission Executive Director Gregory Conrad said the new restrictions imposed last month on coal mining violated the role of state agencies as primary regulators.

OSMRE under Obama said it did more outreach with states and other agencies than on any other rule in its history, but Conrad said states were "locked out."

"It imposes an inflexible nationwide approach that is unworkable from the states's perspective," Conrad said today.

National Mining Association CEO Hal Quinn said the rule was also unnecessary because OSMRE reviews of state programs show little off-site impact. Quinn has made the argument before.

OSMRE, for its part, has repeatedly said previous guidelines were out of date and ill-suited to changes in the mining industry.



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OSMRE has said the rule may end up creating reclamation jobs, but Quinn said it will eliminate one-third of the coal workforce.

"The demise of the stream rule under the Congressional Review Act will be a fitting end to a rule that lacked any purpose or need, produces no discernible benefits, but carries enormous cost and consequences not only for coal miners, but countless others," Quinn said.

Methane rule

Western Energy Alliance President Kathleen Sgamma voiced the same concerns about BLM's new approach to curbing methane emissions at oil and gas operations.

BLM needs to be sent back to the drawing board, she said, because the new air quality restrictions go beyond the agency's authority under the Mineral Leasing Act and usurp U.S. EPA.

According to Sgamma, the oil and gas industry has taken steps on its own, reducing methane emissions by 21 percent even as production has grown.

"We are doing it through technological innovation, not with red tape that is extremely costly, inefficient," she said.

New Mexico Business Coalition President Carla Sonntag said the methane rule is cutting into vital revenue from oil and gas, leaving New Mexico with a budget deficit.

"The deficit and our ability to take care of our kids depend largely on tax revenues from oil and gas producers," Sonntag said. "We understand low market prices are part of the equation, but this implementation of the methane rule has been unreasonably punitive to our oil and gas industry."

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas, and reductions were part of President Obama's Climate Action Plan. Rule defenders say reducing the amount wasted is good not only for the environment, but also for companies and taxpayers.

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4. PUBLIC LANDS: Oversight Republicans demand documents on FWS lead ammo ban

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Corbin Hiar

Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee are requesting documents from the Fish and Wildlife Service about a controversial plan to phase out lead ammunition and fishing tackle on wildlife refuges.

"As I understand it, FWS issued this order abruptly with little or no input from interested parties on the last full day of the previous administration," Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) and Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy and Environment Chairman Blake Farenthold (R-Texas) wrote yesterday in a [letter](#) to Jim Kurth, the acting director of FWS.

They cited a press release from the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, a state regulatory group, that was highly critical of former FWS Director Dan Ashe's Order 2019, which called for the use of nontoxic ammunition and fishing weights "to the fullest extent practicable for all activities on Service lands, waters, and facilities by January 2022" (E&E News PM, Jan. 23).

"The Committee questions the cost and burden that this order would place on sportsmen who recreate on FWS land," the lawmakers said in the letter. "We are also interested in knowing the considerations weighed in the preparation of this order."

They asked Kurth to provide "all documents referring or relating to the development and issuance" of the lead ammunition and tackle ban by Feb. 13. They also requested a briefing in the next two weeks on the agency's "outreach efforts to the states and sportsmen's community."

FWS has long warned of the dangers of lead exposure to fish and wildlife, particularly birds. Some animals ingest lead shot or fishing weights directly from carcasses left in the field.

The agency already bans the use of lead ammunition for hunting waterfowl such as duck and geese in refuges. The order will expand that to all species.

Gavin Shire, FWS's public affairs chief, said the agency had received the information request and is "working to comply."

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5. TRIBES: Renewed push for expanded drilling under Trump

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Valerie Volcovici, Reuters

Some Native American tribes are pushing to fast-track drilling and mining leases on their lands now that President Trump is in office.

The Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota missed out on the oil boom that hit the rest of the state in the past several years due to government red tape that applies only to tribal territory, leaders said.

"The reservation looked like the hole of a doughnut," said Marcus Levings, former chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation's reservation. "Everything around us was moving, and there was nothing in the middle."

Lawyers and tribal leaders say the permitting process for drilling on tribal lands can take three times as long compared with private property.

Though Native American lands cover just 2 percent of the country's land area, they hold up to 20 percent of all U.S. oil and gas reserves — and significant amounts of coal.

A Native American coalition tapped by White House leaders to guide Trump's Indian policy has proposed relaxing drilling requirements and transferring tribal land to private ownership.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) lambasted any deregulatory effort.

"The regulations are there for the public, including tribal members, to know what the intended and unintended consequences of that project are going to be," he said.

Many Native American nations that lined up to support the Standing Rock Sioux in their fight against the Dakota Access pipeline are pursuing extraction projects on their own lands. The central issue, many say, is not fossil fuel development but tribal sovereignty.

"We've always wanted jurisdiction over our people and our land to the fullest extent possible," said Jackson Brossy, executive director of the Navajo Nation's Washington office (Valerie Volcovici, Reuters, Jan. 27). — GD

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6. EPA: Website to be updated next week — spokesman

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Hannah Hess

One week into the Trump administration, U.S. EPA's climate change page remains as it was under President Obama.

Spokesman Doug Erickson said today that EPA's entire website will be "updated, hopefully next week sometime," emphasizing the agency is conducting a review of its whole site — "nothing more, nothing less."

"We are reviewing the entire web page — not just the climate page, not just the carbon page," he said.

Erickson's comments, in a brief interview with E&E News, come as billionaire Tom Steyer's NextGen Climate launched a new campaign to preserve the information presented on the agency's climate change site.

Announced today, SaveOurEPA.com is nearly identical to EPA's climate change pages, with linked documents and data, and topped with a big orange banner inviting visitors to "Join Us."

"As Americans, we will not allow Donald Trump to erase the truth or rewrite history," Steyer said. "This information belongs to the people, and the public has a right to know the truth."

The action was prompted by news reports Tuesday evening that the climate page would be eliminated, which Trump administration officials later walked back (Greenwire, Jan. 25).

Meanwhile, data specialists with the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative have been conducting daily checks of more than 25,000 URLs, part of a sweeping monitoring system put in place before Trump took office.

Rebecca Lave, a volunteer with EDGI who is heading the monitoring effort, said they have noticed changes that are "absolutely routine" but nothing significant yet.

"Monitoring really needs context," Lave stressed, explaining that EDGI would be careful to verify changes before raising any red flags about altered or deleted data.

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7. CLEAN POWER PLAN: States, cities defend Obama EPA in latest legal challenge

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Amanda Reilly

Seventeen states and Washington, D.C., today moved to defend the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan against the latest legal bid by challengers to kill the rule.

Led by New York, the states told the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in a motion that they had an interest in seeing the rule upheld. They were joined by the cities of Boulder, Colo.; Chicago; New York City; and Philadelphia, as well as two counties in south Florida.

The motion seeks to intervene in litigation brought earlier this week asking a federal court to review EPA's decision to deny several requests to administratively reconsider the Clean Power Plan (Greenwire, Jan. 26).

Under the Clean Power Plan, which has been stayed by the Supreme Court, states were required to develop and put in place plans to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

Earlier this month, EPA denied all requests to change the rule except a handful of reconsideration petitions focused on waste-to-energy and biomass issues. It deferred those issues, noting that a separate agency scientific and technical investigation on biomass may clarify the treatment of that fuel.

The new lawsuit over the petition denials comes as the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit may soon issue a ruling on the legality of the underlying Clean Power Plan.

President Trump has also vowed to get rid of the rule, along with other components of the Obama administration's climate plan.

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8. SCIENCE: Letters to Trump admin air concerns over communication limits

E & E News, Jan. 27 | Christa Marshall

Two major science organizations have sent letters to the Trump administration expressing concern about reports of the muzzling of federal scientists and their research.



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American Geophysical Union CEO Christine McEntee cited both direct complaints from AGU's members and media reports of directives at several federal agencies to restrict communications with the public.

"We are concerned that such directives flout principles of sound scientific integrity, which includes transparency, and may even violate your agency's scientific integrity policy. Perhaps more importantly, science plays a critical role in advancing national security, a strong economy, public health, and food security," states the [letter](#), which was sent to 10 federal agencies, including U.S. EPA, the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior and the State Department.

The group, which has more than 60,000 members, said public release of data such as earthquake mapping is critical for protecting lives and the economy.

Separately, Sigma Xi, the scientific research honor society, sent a letter to President Trump asking that any public restrictions on scientists at federal agencies be removed.

"We all need to work hard to ensure that the transfer of information to the public is ensured to support their ability to prepare and respond to natural disasters, fight the spread of disease, resolve environmental concerns, and take further actions to improve their daily lives," said the [letter](#).

The White House did not respond to a request for comment, but administration officials have pushed back this week about some public reports of media clampdowns on federal scientists and agencies.

On Wednesday, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said the White House didn't order a halt to social media activity at federal agencies (E&E News PM, Jan. 25).

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